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Service before self

IN a society that is becoming more and more materialistic, the call by the Prime Minister to youths to embrace the spirit of volunteerism is timely. This noble ideal should be inculcated among the young so that they will grow up to be caring citizens.

Voluntary work should be a cause that we pursue throughout our lives because it not only makes us better individuals but helps create a better nation as well.

This driving force could be harnessed to help the Government implement its social agenda. The spirit of volunteerism, in the words of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, means doing deeds voluntarily without thinking of the rewards.

He said it was the best way of building a nation of people who were compassionate and caring.

A developing country such as Malaysia which aspires to be a developed nation should not only concentrate on the economic aspects of development.

It should also constantly pay attention to the other equally important attributes of an advanced nation such as a caring and civil population.

The foundation of volunteerism is best instilled among the young and the Prime Minister has rightfully urged the youths of all races to work as Malaysians towards a common goal of helping each other to imbue a feeling of goodness in the community.

There are many ways in which Malaysians of all ages and inclinations can volunteer their time and energy in helping others and the community and thus contribute in their own way to make this country a better place to live in.

They can help at orphanages and old folks homes, raise funds for worthy causes and even take part in tree planting projects.

The gotong-royong concept whereby members of a community, frequently from different races, gather together to do volunteer work such as cleaning drains is a unique Malaysian way to encourage self-help activities among the people. Such volunteerism also fosters closer relations among various ethnic groups.

Volunteer organisations such as the Red Crescent Society and St John's Ambulance are well known for their exemplary services and the many volunteers in such organisations include the young who devote their time and effort to help those in time of need.

The Rotary Clubs are also well known for their community services undertaken by volunteers.

There are also many other organisations set up with the objective of serving society but which require volunteers especially the youths to provide the many services.

Welfare homes are sometimes run by volunteers but they certainly can do with more help.

Community and voluntary service need not necessarily be channelled through a formal organisation. It is more important that the people, especially the youths, are imbued with the spirit of volunteerism so that they give their service whenever this is required without being asked to do so.

For instance, a youth will voluntarily help an old woman to carry her heavy bag to board a bus or guide a blind man across the road.

If we are provided with an opportunity to help improve the lives of the

less fortunate, we should consider it a privilege to do so.

This is because as we go through the journey of life, we are faced with many uncertainties and challenges and we can never know that we ourselves may one day rely on the assistance of others. Volunteerism is a noble objective that we should all encourage and cherish.

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